

when i tried to regain a little face  
by explicating an overheard hypothesis involving  
the sensing of magnetic fields by migratory birds,  
she said, "well, what else do they have to do?"  
apparently, i am not even to be left the punch-lines.

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE END

She used to go home to her parents  
four times a year for about a week or so,  
which provided me with an excellent opportunity  
for a little of the old getting-of-things-out-of-one's  
system.

I'd write a little, drink a lot,  
take my kids to a ballgame and a movie,  
fall in and out of love at least once,

and by the time she returned  
I'd be missing her, horney for her,  
with things I wanted to say to her,  
places I wanted to go with her --  
just plain glad to have her back.

Today she announced that she's not going home this summer.

#### THE SOCIETY OF BACCHUS

There are those who taste wines  
with the tips of their tongues,  
while others cite the importance of bouquet  
and yet others insist on a perfectly cleansed palate.

I taste wine with my ulcer.  
Gallo, for instance, comes right back up, every Gallo,  
including the wrongly praised Hearty Burgundy.  
When they struck Gallo,  
the farmworkers automatically raised the level  
of California wines.

A nice Chenin Blanc, perhaps Charles Krug's,  
or a mellow Barbera, most notably Louis Martini's,  
not only stays down,  
but will probably require only a tablet or two of Maalox  
to relieve the discomfort.

A truly excellent Bordeaux rouge, however,  
or a Chateauneuf-du-Pape, or, on occasion,  
an exceptional Beaujolais village  
will pass the ultimate test --

if followed swallow for swallow with Perrier water,  
no antacids will be necessary.

I thought of expanding this poem into an article  
for Holiday magazine,

but I'm not sure the public is ready for my method.

### THREE TO BOGGLE THE MIND

#### i

I was riding the freeway  
when I heard him say it, honest to God,  
this very high official in our government:

"We have the most perfect system in the world;  
the problem lies in getting it to work."

#### ii

At home I picked up the sports section.  
The headlines read:  
"Walton unimpressive in Madison Square Garden."  
Closer reading revealed the reference was to  
an interview with sportswriters.

#### iii

Finally, at my daughter's back-to-school night,  
the teacher said, "Her nose is always in a book,  
but I don't think we ought to worry yet."

### THE NADIR OF AMERICAN POETRY

In the middle of the Arizona desert  
they passed a huge Picasso billboard.

"What's that?" she asked.

"Oh," he replied,

"just another roadside abstraction."

### THE DECLINE OF EDUCATION

As I was waiting for the elevator  
a student asked me,  
"What floor is 419 on?"

The felony was compounded when I remembered  
that 419 is the English office.